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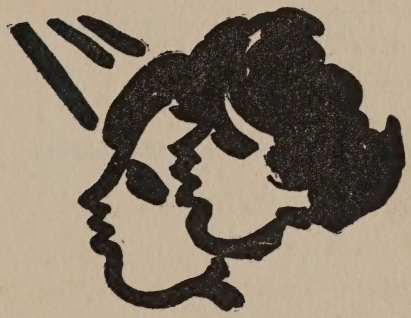
CAN I TEACH MY CHILD RELIGION?



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FIRST EDITION

TO

MY DAUGHTER

JANE STEWART

THIS BOOK

IS

AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

Preface

THIS book has been written for parents, some of whom are avowed Christians and church members, but especially for those others who make no claim to religion but who wistfully long for an adequate spiritual life for their growing boys and girls.

The author was raised in a large family where he was surrounded with children, and he has since been charged with the religious training of numbers of boys and girls. He has had unusual opportunity to be familiar with currents of thought in psychology, psychiatry, and psychoanalysis, as well as religious education. The ideas in this book have been gleaned from experience and from wise and understanding mothers and fathers of the younger generation who label them-

selves moderns, but who desire for their children the pure and gracious influence of religion. It has been written without preoccupations or presuppositions in the hope that such ideas collected in convenient form might prove helpful to those with a kindred wish.

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CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

ALL the qualities of an adequate and resourceful personality have their beginnings early in a child's life. Affection develops into love; appreciation of form, colour and pleasant sound gradually forms the basis of æsthetic feeling; the sense of awe and wonder, coupled with imagination and trustfulness, quietly becomes a well-defined religious life. In like manner, most of the qualities which make for an inadequate and ill-adjusted personality have their inception in early years, or even in the early months of childhood. Unjust treatment breeds distrust; unwise comparisons stimulate jealousy; constant or ill-timed corrections develop destructive inhibitions; too severe requirements lead to a sense of inadequacy. The early years of childhood are most important for character and career.

Recent literature on heredity, wise and discriminating as much of it is, has discouraged many mothers and fathers, especially of the younger generation, who feel helpless to change the life they have transmitted to their children. In like manner, recent psychological treatises have often confused rather than clarified the problem from the standpoint of character development, and left parents with a sense of futility before a problem which all admit to be complex and difficult. On the other hand, a religious approach which advises parents merely to teach their children to recite the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, and the Golden Rule, and to say a few prayers by rote, does not carry us very far in the creation of a sound and vital spiritual life.

Professional educators and psychologists are at present discovering and emphasizing a fact that has long been common knowledge, namely, the supreme importance of

the impressionable and receptive early years of childhood. The behaviourists and a growing number of "individual psychologists," as well as every school of psychoanalysis, have laid emphasis upon the fact that the behaviour patterns or, in simple terms, the ways of looking at life, the responses and the habits of reaction which control life, are formed in early years. As a matter of plain fact and experience, the possibility of adequate spiritual training is neither hopelessly out of our hands, nor is a child eternally predestined either by heredity or environment or by his complex nature; he is a living, growing, plastic spirit. Love, understanding, and self-discipline upon the part of his father and mother can help him grow into a radiant, gracious, and reasonable faith, with all the reënforcements and resources which are in a well-grounded religious life.

What a child receives when he is very

young he keeps through years of maturity. In the crises of life, when our worst self wrestles with our best self, it is the early habits and attitudes that swing the balance. When sudden temptations or unexpected disasters overtake us we revert to our earliest attitudes. The crisis always reveals what has gone into one's initial spiritual equipment. If the contributing factors have been courage and love, courage and love will dominate in the days of stress; if they have been selfishness and meanness, selfishness and meanness will take command. Many of life's sharpest hours leave no time for the application of reason or the assertion of the will. We must often do automatically what we have been trained to do in the early months and years of life.

A sound spiritual training equips a child for the unforeseen in life which would otherwise take him unprepared save for primitive protective instincts which dictate care of

self almost exclusively. Many apparently cultured men and women act so selfishly in a crisis that afterward they are thoroughly ashamed, yet at the moment they could not do otherwise. Conversely, many seem unerringly to do the sporting and the right thing in an unexpected test. The former class has no deeply laid habits of thought and action built on sound ethical lines; the latter has. One is unprepared for the surprises of life; the other is prepared. It is a solemnizing thought that such fundamental qualities are largely shaped in early years.

Many of the mental tangles of children, apparently caused by influences which, on the surface, have no religious bearing whatsoever, develop attitudes, habits, and reactions which inhibit the mystical upreach toward God in trust and longing which is so central an element in the spiritual life. Most modern men and women, even when their own spiritual life has been hampered

by untoward shocks, wish to discover for their children those resources with which they may develop genuine spiritual appreciation and sincere religious faith. Thoughtful parents are eagerly searching in the maze of modern educational methods for means whereby they can address themselves to childhood perplexities which have a religious significance. Parents and teachers are apt to forget that children have difficulties as grave and important as the major spiritual perplexities of adults.

All influences brought to bear on the lives of children which make for peace of mind, trustfulness, regularity, and love, contribute directly to the upbuilding of the spiritual life, while all factors which develop restlessness, distrust, irregularity, or fear, give rise to perplexities which have a definite spiritual significance. Nothing which directly affects the spiritual or physical health or hygiene of the child is without signifi-

cance. Regularity in bathing, sleeping, eating and evacuation has a definite effect upon the child's receptiveness and his general hospitality to ideas and practices. A hungry child is almost always a nervous child. A jumpy child is often made so by immoderate haste in its care, by overswift movements and hurry. Evenness, smoothness, quietness, and regularity should rule the nursery. A happy child is receptive, an unhappy child is on the defensive.

A few general considerations deserve the attention of all thoughtful parents who wish for their children a well-balanced religious life.

The first requirement for the development of an adequate spiritual background is a recognition of the mystical quality of a child's nature. Children appreciate to a remarkable extent tone of voice and general demeanour, but they also appreciate in a manner unusual in adults, the essential

spiritual realities. The sense of God and the meaning of prayer are either natural or are quickly acquired, and the world of imagination and of fancy is as vivid as the world they see and touch. The other-worldly element of religion, so often decried in a practical generation, is ever present in the lives of little children. Even the most sanguine are deeply mystical, and respond if given adequate spiritual nurture.

Again, it should never be forgotten that children are extraordinarily sensitive. Harshness and irascibility bring them exquisite mental anguish. Loud scolding and vehemence can have no good result. A child is a living spirit, responsive to the colour and texture of his social environment and especially sensitive to the voice, mood, and facial expression of one to whom he naturally turns for help and love. One violent scene, one thoughtless slap in the face, one degradation in the presence of third parties,

can leave a life-long impression upon the tender sensibilities of a boy or girl in infant years.

Spiritual training cannot be resolved into a mere imposition of rules laid down by parental authority. The genius of all religious and spiritual instruction is essentially the communication to children of an outlook upon life, a consciousness of protection and understanding, of vast resources of courage, love, and forgiveness, in appreciation of which they construct their faith in parents, in friends, and supremely in God. Religion, focussing intellect, æsthetic feeling, and will, is too august and vital an interest to be travestied by reducing it to restraints and inhibitions. Parents, educators, and ministers often make the mistake of hating the evil more than they love the good, attempting to construct faith upon a basis of negations rather than upon a positive allegiance to the true, the good, and the

beautiful as they exist in Jesus as the supreme revelation of God.

Sound religion in a home means creative faith in the child until he gains confidence in himself, and a corresponding belief on his part in the trustworthiness of his father and mother and, later, in God and in Jesus Christ. The prime requisites of a growing religious life are responsiveness, mutual respect, and trust upon the part of both parents and children, any one of which qualities is blasted by reducing the most transforming and enhancing of life's interests to a series of taboos and negations.

Mechanical insistence upon artificially created rules never fails to breed restiveness and resentment. Parents who allow themselves to develop a fault-finding attitude may expect their children to look upon religion as a taskmaster, instead of a tremendous reënforcement to life, to regard God as a police officer rather than as a loving, re-

sourceful Heavenly Father. Religion has its stern disciplines, its august and high apprenticeships, but these disciplines are to be accepted as the verdict of a free heart by those who in childhood have grown to love religion, and this most children will naturally do if given a wise and understanding nurture.

In a home where dignity, beauty, and cheerfulness are present and where both parents are themselves religious by conviction, children as naturally become accustomed to prayer, worship, and other religious exercises as to any lesser cultural practice. But in the rush of modern life, not only in city and suburban areas but also in much of the rural population, these conditions are not always present, or are achieved only with the utmost foresight and thoughtfulness.

The emphasis should be continually placed upon the positive virtues—generos-

ity, compassion, forgiveness, lending a helping hand, affection. An empty mind swept and garnished is a likely abode for seven other distressing thoughts worse than the one driven out. Displacement is rather the key to the situation, displacement of bad habits, incorrect responses, inappropriate behaviour, by the steady peaceful cultivation of good habits, correct responses, and more appropriate behaviour. A child is such a bundle of energy and mixes good and bad habits so quickly that only wise insight can save a parent from reducing training to negations, and spiritual nurture to denunciation of what is bad. The emphasis should always be on the positive, constructive virtues which in time displace that which is antisocial and disadvantageous. Displacement rather than suppression is the keyword.

Training in the spiritual life is not so much a pedagogical discipline wherein in-

formation alone is given, or a science which seeks to analyze and evaluate a child's reactions, as it is the art, the fine art, of eliciting and cultivating a child's upreach toward God in prayer, in conduct, and in thought. Religious culture should inform, inspire, and lead to self-giving dedication.

CHAPTER II

THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHILDREN'S PERPLEXITIES

EVEN when parents are placing emphasis upon positive virtues and are seeking to displace the bad with the good, rapidly learning and active children inevitably encounter certain situations which have grave spiritual import and demand extra care and thought. Every alert parent is aware of emotional crises, outbreaking troubles, and subtler hidden difficulties, many of which are far removed from those matters conventionally termed religious but which either help or hinder spiritual growth.

Emotional unsteadiness in parents is a fruitful cause of trouble in the world of little children. No one is as sensitive to a mercurial temperament as the child. If the buoyancy of Monday gives way to melancholy or irritability on Tuesday, the young child, more than anyone else, is affected. This lack of

dependability in volatile parents strikes at the root of the child's belief in the trustworthiness of his father and mother. The flighty child, alternating between smiles and tears, is very often put in this unsteady frame of mind by the absence of equanimity on the part of the father and mother.

Broken promises raise doubt early in a child's life, and this doubt rapidly develops into an overspreading uncertainty which inhibits confidence and faith. A mother in a home of culture and refinement who tells her child that she will take him to the park or the circus if he stops crying, and does not do it, loses the trust of her child as quickly as the mother who scares her child by saying that the policeman or the ash man will take him if he does not cease his whining. Each is applying a technique of bribery, or of fear, which can bring nothing but bad results. Children clothe parents with god-like qualities and, when parents are proven un-

trustworthy, they easily draw the inference that God also is not worthy of complete confidence.

An only child in a family, in infant years and in later life, has peculiar inherent difficulties to master. Rampant moods which come to any child are apt to gain power and destructiveness if a child is not compelled by necessity to accommodate himself to the needs and rights of other children in the household. Normal restraints, self-denial, and sharing where there are two or more children, are invaluable, and nothing but rare insight and intelligence can compensate for a lack of brothers and sisters. Many children grow up in unhappiness because no one has recognized or corrected the inevitable selfishness which results from such a situation. Many men and women in middle age recognize that they are labouring under temperamental disabilities, not realizing that the basis of their trouble lies in the fact

that they were only children in their homes. The only child is apt to be especially difficult when he is married, and one source of marital unhappiness is the unconscious egotism resulting from being a single child in a family. Generosity and kindness to others, so elementary in the spiritual realm, are nurtured only by the wisest of treatment when a lone boy or girl is the centre of parental solicitude. Nursery schools, care in providing opportunities for play with other children, and summer camps—the more primitive the better, provide contact with contemporaries, impossible to achieve in a home blessed with only one child.

The youngest or the oldest child in the family often has a perplexity to face similar to that of the only child. He frequently receives more care than other children, to his harm. It is almost impossible for parents to give an equal amount of affection, or even of care, to each child. Not infrequently a

detailed study will correct an unbalanced devotion to some more favoured child. Wholly apart from jealousy among children, the mistake is a serious one, tending to destroy self-reliance and to diminish all sense of thoughtfulness for others.

Inappropriate punishments cause many children to develop a deep-seated feeling of injustice, a feeling which develops in advancing years into a cynical outlook upon authority in any realm. A child's cosmic consciousness, to be sure, is a very limited one, but if he encounters injustice where he has been led to expect love and fair dealing, he soon develops as profound religious difficulties as the adult who, through ill usage, considers the universe and even God as essentially unfriendly. Children lose their respect for home justice and eventually for all civic and divine justice if punishments are inappropriate. Putting children in dark closets, depriving them of meals, forbidding

them to go to Sunday School or day school, or putting black marks upon their faces for childish infractions, are familiar and detrimental methods of punishing a child.

It is always a mistake to use anything as a punishment which is good in itself. Punishment should develop a negative reaction and should only be employed for that purpose. When work is employed as a punishment the child associates work with shame and disgrace. Frequently parents threaten to call the doctor when a child misbehaves, creating an entirely detrimental association of ideas, and find their child transfixed with terror when he is really in need of a physician, making impossible that attitude of trust and obedience so necessary for the patient.

To say that corporal punishment should be abolished is an unwise generalization and depends upon the individual child. Some boys and girls may be temperamentally

benefited by occasional severity, while sensitive children are often harmed by the feeling of degradation consequent upon bodily punishment. The trouble with most spanking is that it is often merely an emotional outlet for a vexed parent, and no close association is made in the child's mind between the pain he suffers and the wrong act. A parent who habitually resorts to spanking in a crisis will inevitably find that a child will refuse to respond upon first being asked to obey. The child comes to think that a parent is really in earnest only when his father or mother reaches for the paddle. At its best, spanking substitutes fear for affection as a stimulus to appropriate behaviour. No parent should ever lay hand upon a child while angry; on the other hand, if a parent waits until he is calm and objective there may be no possibility of forming an indelible association of ideas between the wrong act and the punishment in the

mind of the child. Once children have reached the age, an age which differs with their general awareness, when they can reason, reflect, and remember, it is doubtful whether spankings can be administered without a dangerous emotional association of revenge and resentment. Many parents diminish any good effects which might come from such punishment by a quick remorse which takes the nature of tearful, overaffectionate treatment and leaves the child in a puzzled state of mind.

The fundamental matter in spanking, as in any other aspect of child care, is that in most cases parents will get the kind of response from a child that they deserve. Obedience is one of the consummate achievements of parenthood, and, to be achieved, must be expected, cultivated, and deserved by both mother and father. Spankings should be administered only immediately after the act, to develop the proper associa-

tion, and then only to cultivate a negative reaction, never in hot blood, and only to break up behaviour which in most cases has been allowed to develop through bad training or neglect. Let a child come to distrust a parent or to harbour even a concealed resentment and it is difficult to train him in a religion whose nature is love and whose service is perfect freedom. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" may apply in the restricted cases noted, but first of all the parent should apply the rod of self-discipline to his own mind and disposition and correctly order the general demeanour of the home which, in the end, will do far more to shape the child's life than any slappings or spankings laid on in an emotional crisis. The one safe principle in helping a child to understand and to believe in the rules and regulations necessary for the best government of home and society is to make the punishment fit, not only the misdemeanour,

but also the temperament of the child. Once a child loses confidence in justice, the stage is set for all manner of doubts which reach far into the philosophical and spiritual realm in later years. Hostility has no place in eliciting more appropriate behaviour on the part of children.

Reprimands in the presence of third parties are another cause of mental anguish to children, injuring their self-respect and creating resentment. Older boys and girls unconsciously suffering from bruised sensibilities, apparently forgiven and forgotten, often maintain a correct external attitude toward parents from a sheer sense of duty, when, spiritually, they find little to unite them in that close filial bond of comradeship so vital to a growing love. Resentment bred of public rebuke is more deeply engraved upon a child's memory than most parents realize. Many adults have secretly hated their parents, and have never known

it, because of inappropriate punishments. Unless home life moves forward with a measurable degree of peace and concord, not only is the religious thought impeded, but also many other processes of thought, and even physiological functions are apt to suffer from aberrations from the normal. Neither home nor school nor society can exist without rules, rules that are conceived in reason and enforced in fairness, while inappropriate or capricious punishments lead only to confusion and distrust.

The double life of parents brings an untold amount of suffering to little children. Disregarding all questions of morality, subtle hypocrisy comes as a blight upon the trusting life of any child. Many parents take a worldly attitude toward life among their contemporaries, but with their children they assume an attitude of devotion and religious faith. This rift in the spiritual life of the parents is quickly communicated to

the sensitive appreciation of their children. Insincerity is discovered and a consequent lack of faith in parents is the result. One of the most serious crises a child ever faces is the realization that his parents are not as worthy or as heroic as he had dreamed in those years when father and mother occupied so large a place in his affection and trust. Doubt of a mother's or a father's sincerity and faithfulness reacts directly upon a child. Especially if he feels that he is being trained religiously, as a matter of family policy, in practices and exercises in which the parents themselves find no interest or joy, he soon grows to despise not only religious training, but religion itself. The mother who is unjust in her discipline, unsteady in her affection, and critical of her neighbours does not long deceive her children. The father who scolds his children off to Sunday School and remains at home with pipe and Sunday paper creates a de-

termination upon the part of his offspring to give church absent treatment, once they have gained their freedom. Little children are seldom deceived by the hypocrisy of their parents and often suffer because of their unacknowledged disappointment in grown-ups they have worshipped as nothing short of God.

Fear is the most overspreading spiritual problem of any age in life. Fear of punishment, sensitiveness to scolding, the threat of illness, the suspicion that they will not be taken seriously, dread of the social task of meeting people, apprehension of being discredited as weak or unskilful in sports, of being unwanted in children's social affairs, of being undesirable as a close companion, a sense of weakness when confronted with school examinations—all these and many other circumstances bring agony to the life of many children.

Fear, although it may be a poignant re-

ality, can be easily concealed by a clever child. Children and adults hide their apprehension by overactivity, overjoviality, pugnaciousness, and boisterousness. We all whistle at times to keep up our courage. Emil Ludwig, in his *Biography of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, states that all that monarch's sword-rattling episodes are but the noisy activity of a scared man who feared that he was incapable of ruling a vigorous, warlike people—a typical example of the effort to conceal fear.

Religion for little children, as for adults, has a special quality of dispelling fear. When a child gains the idea that he is living in a world of bumps and jars but that love is constant, that respect is unflagging, that people believe in him, and, above all else, that God, whom he serves through fair play and kindness and whom he approaches through prayer, is always available for him in the ups and downs of life, he begins to

know the meaning of courage based on faith. The only occasion for courage is in the presence of fear, and a child rightly instructed soon develops the habit of reverent and eager outreach in prayer in the midst of life's perplexities. Children can be taught, in their simple, trusting prayers, to ask not that all difficulties be removed, but for courage and endurance in the midst of their troubles. It is also important for children to understand that God may deny as well as give, that He may say no, as well as yes—a fact which has not dawned upon the consciousness of many adults, and causes them to unreasonably jettison their faith. By quiet, creative confidence on the part of older people, a very timid child can be encouraged until he has faith in himself, faith in parents and friends, and faith in God.

Dread cannot be dismissed by making a child's timorousness appear absurd, but only through showing him quietly and pa-

tiently that there are no reasons for his fear, or that the danger he sees can be avoided, the hazard escaped, or that he can overcome the object which is threatening him. A steady understanding confidence will do more to relieve a child of his fears than any amount of ridicule or scolding.

The fear of the dark for some children is an acute agony which can easily result from a number of causes. Fear of the darkness generally results from faulty associations, due often to accident, but more generally due to the bad management of parents or nurses. A child will naturally associate darkness with sleep if he is customarily put to sleep in a darkened room. Dread of the dark is an acquired fear, but one difficult to dislodge. When, however, a father or a mother walks hand in hand with a child in the dark, touching with him familiar objects, and showing him there is no cause for dread, telling him that God is in the darkness as

well as in the light, he can gradually overcome his excessive apprehension.

The children of widows and widowers present peculiar difficulties. A widow or widower has a special task, in providing for the life of boys and girls that well-balanced filial and parental companionship which only two thoughtful parents can bring in perfection. The lone parent is compelled to draw upon wise and affectionate members of the opposite sex to give children that proportion of companionship which can only come from the confidence and affection of both men and women. Happy is the father or mother in this predicament who can gain the sincere coöperation of some discreet man or woman in this delicate task. Religion, to be well balanced and most adequately understood and appreciated, must be mediated through the experience of adults of both sexes. The spiritual life of a man in office, shop, or factory brings certain au-

thentic insight which is denied a woman in the home, and *vice versa*. A child is enriched by both experiences and should not be denied either the one or the other.

Children of divorced or separated parents present a spiritual problem of the first magnitude. The perfect balance of comradeship with father and mother is out of the question. All children in this situation have been gravely sinned against, even though the divorce or separation is the only way out of an intolerable situation. The custodian of such children faces the necessity of providing high-minded adult companionship of the opposite sex, or of running the danger of warping the personality of the children. Only the wisest and most considerate spiritual teaching and explanation of family differences can prevent a child from acquiring a fixed idea of one parent or the other, often an idea tinctured with hatred or fear or contempt, which disturbs his peace of mind. An

unusual emotional tension is inevitable in such cases in all mattters dealing with the relationship between the father and mother. Evasive answers and vindictive remarks beget inevitable consequences in a child's spiritual life. Only the most fair and moderate relation of the facts in utter candour will satisfy the child's curiosity and relieve him from too great an emotional strain.

Jealousy is a problem encountered very early with children. A child's natural desire for attention and affection is a matter of exceeding importance and, if thwarted, leads to wounded feelings. Children, even very young children, often feel displaced upon the arrival of new babies. This is especially the case when adopted children are brought into contact with children born in the household. Conversation with little ones about the new baby which is coming can often forestall the shock, and a wise restraint

from too lavish demonstration over the newcomer in the presence of his disaffected brother or sister will do much to lessen heartache and to prevent jealousy. Fear of displacement can be removed by constant affection, and the excitement to jealousy reduced to a minimum by moderation in the display of love toward the new child.

Children can often escape jealousy by being employed in small ways in the care of younger members. A normal child quickly learns many things he can do to amuse or to care for a smaller child. However, younger children who are helpful in the home should not be allowed to identify themselves with parents and so overdo their parental attitude. A "little mother" of twelve is, after all, not a little mother, but a young girl, and should have her chance at happy, care-free childhood. An identification of a child with his parent often develops not only too great seriousness, but

priggishness and the assumption of a wisdom he cannot possess at so early an age.

Favouritism, unconsciously developed, is the most frequent cause of jealousy in children and adults. Sometimes a healthy child is neglected in affection because he is so self-reliant; at other times a child, because of his strength and beauty, may receive an undue share of attention, whereby others suffer. Children hunger for affection with as great an intensity as they hunger for food. Unwise comparison or favouritism among children inevitably breeds dislike and causes offence.

Another experience often encountered by children, which leads to spiritual perplexities, is the occurrence of death. What shall a parent say and how shall he act when there is death in the home? Certainly younger children should be saved from witnessing the presence of death and can receive no benefit from attending funeral services, so

often characterized by a pagan or atheistic depression and unwonted lugubriousness, interspersed with outbreaks of grief. The child should also be spared from witnessing those outbursts of weeping which are natural and beneficial to older members of the family who are fully aware of the loss which has come to the home. Children can be told simply and beautifully that the loved one has gone from us; that he or she is with God, and that is not far distant; that the one who was with us is now a spirit; that although we cannot see the familiar face, or touch the loving hand, or hear the voice of the belovèd, God keeps and cares and provides better than we can ask or think. Brief, clear explanations, when the one relating the occurrence is master of himself, will satisfy children and save them from morbid fears and memories which secretly torment many men and women for life, furnishing a seed bed for unnatural growths of fear and horror.

Habitual fatigue is a matter which requires intelligent handling. Fatigue is natural and wholesome after a period of play, but if fatigue is allowed to become a prevalent condition of a child's life, it inevitably disturbs his peace of mind, makes him irritable and selfish, and often lazy, careless, and indifferent to the needs and the rights of others. At the same time, he develops a resistance to the idea of graciousness and thoughtfulness toward others which is an essential part of religion.

Children become overweary from many causes, some from too exciting games, some through insufficient or too infrequent feeding, some through a sleep schedule improperly adjusted, some through an unusual period of rapid growth, others through anæmia or other physical disabilities. The chronically overweary child, whether it be due to mental and nervous causes or some other condition, demands as much gracious

care as if he were sick, as indeed he is. It is an injustice to call him lazy because he refuses to exhibit an energy he does not possess. It is unkind to punish or deride him for his inability to do what other children do, and it is equally detrimental to coddle him. Few children will enter with zest into spiritual or any other training if they are habitually fagged. Many parents are disappointed in a child who cannot respond as he should because he is suffering from overweariness. To scold him for this condition can only make matters worse. There is only one appropriate course of action, and that is to locate, with the help of the best children's physician available, the cause of his lethargy and remove it.

Parents are often shocked to discover that their children relate experiences that never occurred, that incidents are embroidered and downright lies told out of whole cloth. Lying is the common experience of

all children at certain periods, and a large group never outgrow it. Children have keen imaginations: the abode of the fairies is just around the corner; the little red hen speaks; the rabbit who would not eat has his reasons; the tortoise and the hare converse before they run their race. Now, a child must face a much more complicated environment than adults generally think. He must arrest attention, he must at times be a hero, he must win admiration; sometimes he does what men and women do, by fooling himself he imagines he has attained his object. He tells stories to please, to satisfy his wishes in that realm of dreams and fancy where wishes can come true. His simple, naïve stories are the wistful descriptions of his own desires. Such fabrications gradually fade out of a child's life as he grows older if his wise elders receive in a sanguine manner the products of his imagination.

But there are other lies, lies told wilfully to deceive. Such a habit is almost always in its beginning the effort of a child to defend himself from too severe requirements, from scolding, to protect himself from unpleasant, or harsh, or temperamental reactions of his parents to his behaviour. If he has assurance that whatever he does he will receive loving and just treatment, he will be less apt to form a habit of defensive lying.

The whole problem of honesty is largely wrapped up in prevailing mood in the life of parents. If a little girl sees her mother take advantage of a conductor, to cheat him out of a trolley fare, she will not forget it. If a boy hears his father laugh over a sharp deal he has effected, he will be guided by his elder. The teaching of honesty is not enough; it must pervade the home, an atmosphere of truth in which all, even to the tiniest, are strengthened in the constant

struggle toward integrity of life. Recently I saw a father and mother, accompanied by an eight-year-old son, wilfully deceive a bus conductor out of a fare. The little fellow was all eyes and ears. He understood the situation perfectly. He saw the puzzled conductor, he beheld the mutual glance of smug satisfaction between his respectable, but dishonest, father and mother. As the bus bowled along, he studied the face of his father with a look of wonder. That boy was weighing in his mind one of life's great questions—does it pay to be honest? His parents were encouraging him to believe that it pays to be a cheat. Children often overhear telephone conversations in which white social lies are told. Is the world made that way? Very well, they will do as others do!

Every thoughtful parent is concerned regarding the aberrations from appropriate behaviour which are generally termed com-

plexes. The language and the ideas of the new psychology have been sown broadcast in modern literature dealing with children, and have brought forth a harvest in which wheat and tares are almost inextricably confused. There is no doubt that our knowledge of the inner nature of both children and adults has been vastly amplified in the last twenty years, but the very immensity of the field has brought consternation to many parents and has caused them to doubt their own common sense, which is one effective resource at their command to meet their situation, and, in nine cases out of ten, the best guide.

There is no adequate and wholly satisfactory definition of a complex. The term is popularly employed to describe mental disturbances or intensified sentiments which are so pronounced as to be distinctly out of the ordinary or normal experience.

The sense of inadequacy, or the so-called

inferiority complex, sooner or later invades nearly every household. There is no degree of intensity which can in any proper sense be said to mark sharply the difference between modesty and an exaggerated sense of inferiority. The abnormal feeling of inadequacy is engendered by many causes which are either avoidable or remediable.

Suppression, in many forms, distorts the expanding personality of children. By suppression is not meant those necessary and just disciplines which make for pleasant and wholesome life, but rather those inhibitions which exercise a malevolent influence upon a growing child.

Unfair, ill-timed, and immoderate criticism kills the initiative of untold numbers of boys and girls, and is also one of the major causes of spiritual unrest among adults. A sardonic smile, a cynical remark, gentle satire, frequent and irritable corrections, as well as blatant reprimands, often leave a

permanent imprint upon the sensitive mind of a child. Human nature is so constructed that children quickly accustom themselves to remain apparently unhurt when they are suffering inwardly. Even children of three or four years of age learn to receive unkind and unjust criticism with stoicism, developing almost inevitably a lack of confidence or excessive timidity. "Perfect love," love which is thoughtful and considerate, "casteth out fear," but nagging criticism develops what it seeks to remedy. In addition to avoiding criticism, a wise parent can often reënforce a child's faith in himself, not so much by an appeal to his manliness or exhortations to achieve or excel, but by helping him to understand that in every sense he is a child of God, that friends and loved ones at home love him, and that God surrounds him with His care and affection, that Jesus said He knew His own by name, and that all the power of love and truth and

honour is on the side of any boy or girl who is trying to live by love and truth and honour.

Forcing children into an unnatural pose also distorts their personalities and frequently brings in its train a feeling of inferiority, even if cleverly concealed. A distinguished professional man recently stated that one child in his family had been a misfit. She had been a timid little recluse, without social qualities or the ability to advance herself in the life of her school. The mother, an imperious-minded woman, had taken the child in hand, had discussed matters with her, had trained and groomed her and brought her out in society, and now the child, as the father put it, "is a typical, conceited little flapper, but very able and very charming." A question inevitably raises itself in such a situation—can a child so circumstanced, who has achieved a technique to fit her for the place in society to

which her mother aspires, hide her trembling heart permanently, either from herself or from her friends, by blatant and care-free manners? Could she achieve, under such suppression of her temperament and natural inclinations, an inner reserve of peace and quiet? Under the pressure of parental wishes many young children are trained to suppress their true natures in the interest of conforming to some conventional type.

Nothing so surely kills originality—that distinguishing spark that makes a living spirit out of an erstwhile clod—as suppression by criticism or crowding a child into some preconceived mould.

The ill-favoured child is almost always handicapped by either a persistent or an intermittent feeling of inferiority. A child with some physical oddity—a malformed lip, lisping speech, lameness, bad hearing, excessive freckles, or exceeding plainness of features—is apt gradually to develop a sense

of inadequacy, unless treated with a wisdom which takes attention from these eccentricities of life and appearance and focusses attention upon his positive capabilities. Boys who are not robust compare themselves unfavourably in the public gaze of the swimming pool and locker room with boys who are more robust. Girls who find their appearance less attractive than their associates' frequently feel that they are ill equipped for the social struggle. Such children need abundant affection and special consideration to give them confidence in those qualities they do possess. Religion, with its emphasis upon quality of life and inward value, rather than upon external and material aspects, has a special meaning for such children. Boys and girls who are taught that "as a man thinketh in his heart so is he" gain liberation from the tyranny of external appearances and also grow to value others for inward strength of charac-

ter rather than for happy circumstances of good physique or pleasing features.

The bullied child almost always has an unwonted sense of inferiority and presents an acute problem to both parents and teachers, for he often grows to take a strange pleasure in his misfortunes. Some little children, naturally meek, invite bullying by their parents or by older or stronger children, and develop a hang-dog attitude or an exaggerated sense of holding back and waiting for the leadership of others. Such a child needs someone to believe in him, to trust in his capacities, to assure him that he can do what others have done. He needs his self-reliance and independence developed. Love, upon the part of his elders who largely create the conditions of his life, informed with intelligent appreciation and prayer upon his own part, linking him up to God who is also struggling to make beautiful and perfect this world of shocks and blows,

is an available liberating force to emancipate the bullied child.

The sickly boy or girl is a special case, for such a child is almost always "spoiled." Along with selfishness and fault-finding, he is very apt to develop a feeling of weakness and a lack of self-reliance. No one is as sensitive as children to disabilities, illness, or weakness. A creative thing has to be done in such situations. When a sickly child is very young he should be treated like other children as much as possible. Solicitation about his welfare, especially in the presence of others, only aggravates his sensitiveness regarding his condition. Later, stories from the biographies of those who have laboured under handicaps in the field of medicine, exploration, literature, or in the arts, fortify the child for the difficult years ahead. This indirect method of arousing the child's ambition and causing him to believe in himself is always better than too much dis-

cussion with him regarding his ailments. As he grows older, doors of opportunity for little acts of kindness and for independent achievements in work or sports can be opened to him. Paul, who also had a thorn in the flesh—some persistent illness—has served to steady many faltering spirits who doubted their ability to make this life useful because of either temporary or permanent illness.

The foregoing are only typical of many circumstances and incidents which develop a sense of inadequacy within the minds of younger children. All parents should assess and appraise the direction of the inner life of their children and bring to them available resources of love and courage and understanding to strengthen the weak spots in their experience and character.

There is much loose talk abroad regarding the inferiority complex. Humility is still

a virtue, though it may have no market value. Most creative souls have what their robust comrades would call an inferiority complex. Parents should be sure they are not destroying a creative quality within a child and substituting for it an unbearable mediocrity resulting from a spirit so assured that it is not even sensitive to its own needs. By and large, it has been the handicapped who have given this world its greatest treasures. In the give and take of life there comes often a sense of inadequacy which is true and cannot be driven away by mere robustness and activity. Even a richly endowed personality is humble at its highest and best. "Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Religion brings freedom and, at its best, alternates between worship and work, rejoicing and contemplation, prayer and praise, and although humility is a first principle in any

genuine spiritual development, it does not inhibit any child from the freest use of initiative in the exercise of his powers. Lee Wilson Dodd's recently published book, *The Golden Complex,* is a healthy antidote for many unbalanced assertions of some educators, psychologists, and psychoanalysts regarding the feeling of inadequacy.

Association with adults to the exclusion of companionship with their contemporaries is injurious to most children. On the one hand, there may develop a wholly abnormal feeling of deference which may carry over in later life and give the child thus raised a permanent feeling of exaggerated sensitiveness to the opinions and wishes and general deportment of other adults. On the other hand, too exclusive association with adults will often lead a child to identify himself prematurely with adult life and, to a large extent, close his mind to the lessons he can learn from experience with

those of his own age. Sending children to nursery schools adequately equipped with wise teachers, much earlier than the conventional age of four for kindergarten and six for first grade, aids little children to adjust themselves to the world of children's property rights and social conventions. A child can receive immense benefits from a nursery school arranged to care for children from eighteen months onward, especially if he is a single child in the family. Where there are two or more children a corresponding benefit can be received from play together at home.

Another great advantage derived from early schooling is that in many cases the child receives discipline from trained teachers without the almost inevitable emotional background of chagrin, shame, or indignation upon the part of the parent caused by his or her eagerness for the child's progress. An immense amount of necessary ethical

instruction about *meum et tuum*, about co-operation and the multitudinous rules which make for kindly and cordial relationships, which help form the foundation of religious and civic life, can be informally learned in properly conducted nursery schools. Too exclusive association with adults robs the child of inestimable advantages to be gained with those of his own age.

The Œdipus Complex is a phenomenon not unfamiliar, but one which rarely affects children raised in a home where warm affection exists between the child and both parents. Not a few psychologists doubt the existence of any such emotional abnormality. But however men differ about exact terms and definitions, the fact remains that some boys have such an intense attachment for their mother that they are unable to reach out in their affection to include a wider and wider circle as they grow in years. The same can be as truthfully said as between father

and son, daughter and mother, or daughter and father. The fact is not to be obscured in discussions regarding how best to describe it. Those who have read Sophocles' *Œdipus Tyrannus* know the tragedy of that young man who, through ignorance, married his mother and in anguish burned out his eyes. Modern psychiatrists have used his name in their terminology to designate an abnormal tie between mother and son. Possessory parenthood works untold harm to children. Parental self-indulgence disguised as parental solicitation often lays a subtle hold upon parents, so completely monopolizing the affections of the child that he has no affection left for those normal relationships outside the family which increasingly develop as he becomes older. The Theatre Guild production of Sidney Howard's *The Silver Cord* is a magnificent portrayal of this problem, and those who have not seen the play will receive equal benefit from reading

the acting version. A great injustice is done a child in artificially restricting his expanding affection. Spiritual growth is dwarfed if affections cannot expand. Religion is social as well as personal and domestic, and can only reach its flower in increasing friendships and in the multiplication of those bonds of affection which link one life with another.

Children have no choice or responsibility for having been brought into the world, neither have their parents a right to claim them as possessions, or to regard them as the extension of their own ego. Phœbe Gilkyson has expressed this point of view exquisitely in her lines:

> Out of my body was fashioned the
> whole of you—
> Blood of me, flesh of me, bone of my
> bone:
> But with no part in the miracle
> soul of you—
> How do I dare to call you my own?

Out of the mists and the seas and
the flowers,
Out of the magic of life-giving Spring,
Out of the peace in the dim twilight
hours,
Blossomed your spirit—the God-
given thing.

Pale is my gift in the light of
that other,
Mine is the infinitesimal part.
God must forgive the vain pride
of a mother
Calling you hers as you lie at
her heart!

No matter how much parents suffer physically or mentally because of the misdeeds of children, no matter how much they genuinely love them and seek to promote their welfare, they must never forget that the chief end of any human life is to grow into the fulness of a responsible independent spirit, sensitive to the highest meaning which man and God has for him. This does not mean relegating decisions to a child who is as yet insufficiently qualified to make them; it

does mean, however, a respect for every child as he gropes forward amid the love and understanding of his parents until he, too, is a self-reliant, questing spirit in the midst of the hurly-burly of life.

Any number of aberrations of normal affections have been designated as complexes. One thing which the average person who has not had special training in psychology needs to remember is that we are made up of a multitude of civilized restraints and barbaric impulses, of human disciplines and animal instincts and desires. Only a trained pediatrician or child psychologist is capable of giving advice in any marked psychopathic disturbance. No one school, no one man, has all the truth; an open mind is the only possible attitude to take. Psychoanalysis should only be carried on by thoroughly trained men of the highest nobility of character and then seldom, if ever, with children.

The steady and moderate outflow of love, a mood of fairness and justice, an equal graciousness to all in the home, coupled with proper diet and regular hours of care-free play and uninterrupted sleep, are in almost every case the most effective remedy for any aberration from normal behaviour, unless greatly aggravated. In case of distinct and alarming developments, an experienced doctor should be consulted. Steadiness, fairness, and gentleness are the watchwords.

A primary fact to be remembered concerning the spiritual nurture of children is that it cannot be delegated if the highest results are to be achieved. It is true that many nurses and governesses have more genuine spiritual life and character than some parents, but religious training at its best needs not only spiritual quality in those who help in the home, but supremely upon the part of the parents. Unfortunately, there is a mistaken tradition among many nurses

and governesses that they are to be in complete control of the child. A thoughtful parent can never allow this presupposition. Coöperation in the common task of caring for the young child admits of the very best efforts of both parent and nurse or governess. Religious instruction may be supplemented by exercises and instruction from nurses and governesses, at camp, in day school and in Sunday School, but there is a special function in helping a child grope his way toward that supreme allegiance to God and Jesus Christ, which is reserved for the father and mother.

From emotional unsteadiness, broken promises, the number of children in the home, inappropriate punishments, parental hypocrisy, fear, the number of parents a child possesses, his state of health, or even the regularity of his meals and sleep, it may seem a far cry to some parents to a growing and vital faith in prayer and Christ

and God. Nevertheless, these outward and visible signs have a direct relation to that inward and spiritual condition from which flows love and trust and confidence. A most important element of his care should be to surround the child with a sense of security which will in itself be a foundation for his emotional life and will furnish that gracious environment in which he can form his responses and habits, surrounded and nurtured by the courage, honesty, and affection of his mother and father and by all within the home.

All the deep-seated perplexities of children have a definite spiritual significance, either preventing the growth of a religious consciousness or arresting its development. Any practice or situation in the home which makes life hectic, uncertain, disorderly, or unfriendly is a direct inhibition to sound spiritual growth, and any influence which engenders calmness, dependability,

order, and friendliness is contributing to the creation of that atmosphere of love and confidence in which alone religion can do its perfect work in reënforcing and stabilizing life. The apparently superficial and transitory perplexities of little children almost invariably have a deep and abiding significance. First months and first years in a child's life are the seasons in which those habits, moods, and attitudes are created which will largely fashion the character of the man or woman that is to be.

CHAPTER III

THE METHOD OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE HOME

EVERY means of religious training should contribute to one supreme end, that of creating a spiritually responsive attitude through which the child can most appropriately receive religious instruction and inspiration, aiding him to construct his own loyalty to God and to Jesus Christ. The creation of a receptive mood touches many matters apparently remote from religion but which nevertheless impinge directly upon the spiritual life.

The first step in teaching anything is the preparation of the teacher. The intellectual and spiritual equipment of parents for religious training of their children, the highest task for which man and wife are called, demands sensitiveness, insight, and a humble learning mind. Children are receptive not alone to ideas but to hidden, subtle

forces. A turbulent heart concealed beneath a smiling countenance is nevertheless felt by a child. Instability of character betrayed by rapidly changing moods, by outbursts of temper, by despondency, fear, depression, or anxiety, by dishonesty or untruthfulness, is discovered inevitably by little children, no matter how great an effort parents make to conceal it. If parents discern nervousness, dishonesty, disobedience, or timidity in their children, they may be sure they see reflected a partial likeness of themselves. A child, in addition to being exceedingly sensitive, is almost unbelievably imitative. Fits of temper, unseemly tantrums, and outbursts of crying are a child's means of copying those violent scenes by which many parents achieve their wishes. Parents who wish to achieve good character in their children must develop good character in themselves. Thoughtfulness, intelligence, humility, and devotion, disciplined

by the knowledge that they are working with the precious stuff of which souls are made, coupled with a yearning for help from on high, will equip parents for their highest enterprise and their greatest adventure—the spiritual training of their children.

The second step in instruction is to achieve favourable conditions. An excited, confused, and irregularly conducted household renders religious instruction difficult. Peace and order are favourable to those moods of joy and confidence in which a child, guided by loving parents and using such simple materials as he can understand, reaches out in his mystical quest for God.

So much depends upon the psychological *milieu* in which the child's religious experience is to find itself, that the dominant mood of a household measurably conditions a child's spiritual life. Horace Bushnell in his famous teachings on Christian Nurture

was wont to call that atmosphere which surrounded a child in his early years the "psychical matrix," comparable to the physical matrix in which the child is carried before birth. The analogy is suggestive. Wholesome fun and robust, noisy games should be the portion of every child, but many parents fall into the easy temptation to distract children by amusement or raillery, or mere noise, and thus escape the difficult but supremely valuable task of helping a child on his first steps in spiritual understanding as he forms his religious beliefs. The general atmosphere which pervades the home is the factor which will have the most determining influence upon the life of little children.

In all cases in dealing with children, calmness, equanimity, and firmness are most appropriate qualities of mind. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Assistant Attorney-General of the United States, through long experience

with thousands who were started wrong in their attitude toward life, herself a wise and understanding mother, remarked in a recent article:

"In its ultimate effect, there is no more cruel home than one which 'pets' the babies and always 'saves the children' consequences not only of their own acts but of those of others. Such homes are unkind to their boys, and are likely to make vacillating a nature that could have developed sturdiness, but they are peculiarly unfair to little girls. What painful hours a young woman must go through to unlearn, if indeed it is ever possible for her to do so entirely, the habits that home is likely to lay in the first years of her life, that tears will bring her anything; that she need not finish what she starts; that someone, somehow, will save her from the unpleasant natural results of her own conduct.

"Discipline needs to be exercised by parents over themselves, discipline enough to forego indulgence of the moment for a larg-

er, understanding love that can say 'no' with uniformity, and make a little baby work over his buttons, and meet self-reliantly his own needs; that will, in every ministration to or contact with the child, pause long enough to decide what adult experience or problem will be most like this childish one, and how can here be sown a habit or attitude of mind that will not have to be substituted or unlearned later. . . .

"A baby cannot be too young to learn obedience—that putting him in bed means sleep or quiet, and crying protest will bring no pleasurable sensation of more attention or the license and indulgence of being taken up again. In the home the child first contacts authority and feels its meaning. Widen the circle a little, and this same authority becomes his concept of law, which, personified, is the state. The first childhood notion of 'governmental' authority wears brass buttons, carries a club, and is called a policeman. Yet for how many children has this symbol of the state and law a sinister import, as someone to run from, who'll

get you, lock you up, from whom you must hide, one to cheat or play pranks on. He early becomes the representative of an authority which it is smart to 'beat'. Is it not natural that in later life, when the impulse to make money by trickery tempts a man, his childish reaction of worsting the policeman tips the balance in favour of beating the government on taxes, evading the anti-trust statutes, or conducting mail frauds?

"The struggle in choosing moral and ethical conduct is tense enough all through life. Home should certainly build up habits of 'instinctive' action that will make the choice easier. To do so it is of vital importance to guard the first reactions a child forms to authority; to associate respect and obedience with the resultant experience of enlarged liberties; to make all first symbols of the state and governmental authority benign influences in his life—the policeman as the guardian of people and homes, who prevents accidents, who 'finds' lost children, helps them across difficult corners, and who may be relied upon for guidance and advice."

In the case of a child spoiled through over-indulgence or through extra attention given in a temporary illness, a certain casualness is the only way to relieve him of a too great eagerness for attention. Too great solicitation only breeds nervousness and distrust. With temperamental children who alternately smile and weep, only peace of mind, moderation in attention, and quiet regulation in all things are adequate to correct exaggerated demands for attention.

Many children give way to fits of anger and progress in selfishness as parents yield and humour them on such occasions. Parents have been told that if they do not come to the relief of a child in a tantrum, he will have fits or rupture a blood vessel, or suffer some other disastrous consequence. There is no truth in this whatsoever, for a child cannot hurt himself in a tantrum. The only response should be to leave him alone and show him no attention until he comes to

his senses. He will soon learn to take his place among other mortals in a more reasonable way.

The wisest method of expressing approval or disapproval is an acute problem with most parents. A child who constantly encounters blame is apt to feel unnecessarily inferior, while the one who is constantly praised demands yet more approbation, and easily becomes a conceited little prig. Promising or giving a reward to children for that behaviour which should be expected of any child is spiritually harmful, begetting a calculating, selfish spirit. Even Christmas candy at Sunday School tends to distort a child's outlook on life and breeds an acquisitive, rather than a generous, nature. Though rewards should not be used in ordinary circumstances, their use is justified therapeutically in cases where bad habits are being broken up. Giving rewards is dangerous at best, and success in attaining

them not infrequently develops selfishness which stands directly in the way of any true progress in religion.

Respect for the privacy of a baby or a child should be taught every member of the family and also the friends of the family. A mother and father often complicate their tasks greatly and do a child harm when they allow relatives and casual visitors to poke, squeeze, and feel the baby, and permit the child to suck visitors' thumbs and chew their bracelets. A child is a human being and its privacy should be respected in those years when it is too young to protect itself. The principle of mutual respect cannot be inculcated too early in both parents and children. A self-respecting, independent personality is in a better position to make those commitments which religion requires even of children, than a personality which has been pulled hither and thither by the self-indulgence of those who have not yet

learned to respect the mind and heart of a child.

Chaffing, or making fun of sensitive children, is spiritually detrimental in nearly all cases. A serious question from a child deserves a serious answer. Recently, a father who has a small child with a very inquiring mind said he could not stop to answer questions, and would not, for the child only asked them again. He had there probably the greatest opportunity he will ever have literally to help create the mental, spiritual, and æsthetic life of that child. Serious, wholesome, and dignified answers should be given to a child's queries. Mutual respect will do much to create that correct *rapport* between parent and child which makes possible in adolescent years the discussion of the creation of life and the meaning of the mysterious capacities within each growing boy and girl. Even dumb animals are aware when they are being tantalized, and there is

nothing more tantalizing than to chaff children or to give them absurd or evasive answers when they are in an inquiring mood.

Almost every parent acknowledges the importance of sex education if a child is to be best equipped in his struggle for character, and not one in a hundred has courage enough to do anything about it. Sex education does not present as enormous difficulties as it is generally felt, if parents will courageously do their duty. A child's curiosity should be completely satisfied at the time of questioning. Evasion and delusion can only work harm. By the time a child is eight years of age he can understand the processes of reproduction in flowers, in lower animals, and in man. The devastating sense of shame so often cultivated by the prudery of parents can be avoided if the child is instructed that all parts and functions of his body are clean

and of God. Such an attitude will help a boy or girl in adolescent years to behave toward the other sex, and bring a sense of the dignity and responsibility which are his in being a custodian for his generation of the life stream of the race.

Circumlocutions about sex only lead to unsatisfied curiosity concerning the most beautiful and elemental function of the human body, a function which, if misunderstood, leads only to mental torment, temperamental maladjustment, and the formation of bad attitudes and mistaken ideas. Every phase of sex life is capable of being explained in simple words a child can understand. A modern mother and father took their children into their garden and, showing the elaborate mechanism of the flowers for giving and receiving the fertilizing pollen, were able to convey to them a clear idea of the fertilizing of woman by man and wholly satisfy the children's curiosity

by true and wholesome answers to the questions. They had only one alternative to such bold and dignified action—to let the children gather scraps of knowledge from obscene sources.

Many parents have found that in swimming and in the dressing room children quickly accustom themselves to adult appearance, enabling the father or mother to answer fully their simple questions when they have noticed differences between man and woman. Sex instruction is an important and dignified matter and, like all the significant affairs in life, demands courage, honesty, and completeness in its treatment.

Masturbation is not as physically harmful as was thought a generation ago. This practice may begin very young in an infant's life. However, the idea of some mothers that almost all investigation of his body by a little child is masturbation is sheer nonsense. From the very beginning a parent

can do well to refuse to develop the negative attitude which leads to a sense of shame. With little children, scolding or slapping or tying the hands does not bring the desired result. Nothing can more quickly develop a negative sense of shame about all sex matters as to accompany a child's inevitable and natural exploratory gropings with cries of "No! No! No!" or "Shame!" Nurses should be given explicit and complete directions on this important matter or a child, even before he can walk, may have a well-defined idea that part of his body is clean and part unclean, an idea which paves the way for an unwholesome and unsatisfactory sex life in adult years. Any sagacious mother can make the practice of masturbation mechanically impossible by using sleeping bags with the arms outside and other similar simple devices. When a child is somewhat older the practice can be discouraged as a part of the general instruction

in cleanliness, good taste, and personal hygiene.

As a rule, it is far better for sex instruction for girls to be given by the mother and for boys to be given by the father. If either father or mother is dead, a wise and kindly relative or friend of the family may be enlisted in this important task.

Every child should be instructed regarding the deep-seated sexual urges which will come upon him from eight or nine years of age and especially is this true in adolescent years. Proper food, bodily cleanliness, outdoor sports, wholesome school life, an honest, understanding attitude at home, will accomplish much. He should be so instructed before the age when masturbation becomes a conscious problem, that he may understand his own body and be prepared to help himself. It is never wise to scare a child about this practice, but to create in him such a respect for his body and for its

natural functions and possibilities that he will be enlisted in its care.

Many children become desperately discouraged, morbidly depressed, or excessively curious about sex matters. The effort to attain a clean, harmonious, and orderly sex life is closely tied with youthful fight for character, for sex and religion are close together in this and in all other periods of life. Every child should have friends, preferably his parents, in whom he can confide and in whom he can find that perfect understanding and trust which will enable him to move through these experiences without feeling he is disgraced and an outcast. When a child understands that nearly everyone is making a struggle to attain correct behaviour regarding sex he gains courage for his individual battle. Respect for self on the part of the child, and sympathy and encouragement on the part of his parents, should be controlling factors in this area

of perpetual tension. Daudet wrote his realistic novel *Sappho* for his son to read when he should attain twenty-one years of age, an age far too late to achieve the maximum of good in sex instruction. Rousseau wrote *Émile* to convey to parents generally a sane and constructive idea about the training of a young man from infancy through marriage, especially in the subtle and important matters of sex. Whatever difference we may have with either Daudet or Rousseau, and we may well have many, they nevertheless reveal that courageous and intelligent attitude which should be the portion of every thoughtful parent; otherwise children will eventually receive instruction from morbid and unwholesome sources.

Especially in adolescent years new interests should be brought into the life of the boy or girl. Biography, beauty in the plastic arts, good reading but not too much reading, plenty of fresh air and wholesome

food, a cheerful and sympathetic attitude at home, and above all steadiness in the emotional life of parents in a period when the emotions of children are fraught with stress and strain, will do much to aid as the child grows into manhood or womanhood.

Children have a right to correct instruction in sex matters. Many parents, instead of using the proper names for all the organs and functions of the body, use absurd or meaningless terms. Other parts and functions of the body are generally called by their correct titles. This only confuses a child when he has to be reëducated and almost inevitably causes him to associate shame with sex life. The American Social Hygiene Association, 370 Seventh Avenue, New York City, has many helpful pamphlets and bibliographies to aid parents in correct sex instruction. A sound and sane understanding of this important aspect of life will do much to aid a child spiritually,

and neglecting it will eventually hinder any child as he grows up in ignorance or untruth. Some pamphlets for parents published by the Association are: *Your Daughter's Mother*, by Rush Kimball Gardiner; *The Mother's Reply*, by Nellie M. Smith; *Social Hygiene and the Child*, by Valeria H. Parker, M. D.; *Training for Youth and Parenthood*, by Newell W. Edson; *Sex in Life*, for adolescents, by Donald B. Armstrong, M. D., and Eunice B. Armstrong A. M.; as well as *Child Questions and Their Answers* and *The Boy Problem* are sound, suggestive, and helpful to parents in dealing with their children.

The problem of homosexuality, portrayed in Édouard Bourdet's play *The Captive*, is not as frequent as is sometimes indicated. The acting version of *The Captive* gives a good presentation of this psychological aberration. Consultation with a specialist should be had when symptoms of this mal-

ady are discovered. Youthful crushes on those of the same sex may be, and in most cases are, harmless, such affection only becoming psychopathical in its more intense form, accompanied by a definite preoccupation in the friendship between two persons of the same sex.

It should be borne in mind that no matter how revolting a turn a child's nature takes, it is generally because he is misdirected or maladjusted, or came into the world with a constitutional predilection, and in most cases is susceptible to treatment or reënforcement in his weak spots. If excessive sex excitement is noticed on the part of a child, it should be discussed with a child specialist.

Sex and religion are not far removed in any age of life—"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"—but in children of younger years and in adolescents the two are almost inseparable. In no case

should a child be given the idea that sex as sex is unclean. It occupies so large and so important a place in life that if a child grows to believe that so significant a function is impure, he is driven to the conclusion that nearly all of life is touched with shame.

Sex instruction is not only possible but imperative for every parent. Many parents find themselves inhibited by their own faulty education and painful experience, but this cannot excuse them. They must reëducate themselves and face their task, realizing the peril of ruining the lives of their children if they allow so great a matter to be decided by the hit-or-miss education achieved by scattered bits of information a child acquires through lascivious stories and fragmentary gossip.

Servants constitute a special difficulty which demands attention as a parent faces the delicate task of the religious training of children. Every home is immensely com-

plicated by the addition of a single helper from outside the ranks of the family. The very fact that servants are generally called by their first names and show a respectful attitude toward members of the family are little indexes which the child quickly grasps. He is apt, as his parents, to speak of servants as "they," and quickly learns to tyrannize over them. A strict requirement of respect on the part of all members of the household for each other, master and servant alike, is a first principle. Parents will do well to dignify all service in the home and, on their part, show to cook and maid and governess that regard which they wish to inculcate in their children. Contempt for servants soon becomes contempt for all who serve, and bars the way to any thoroughgoing religious development in its social aspects.

The place of authority in child life is a much-disputed point. Certain sections of modern educators to the contrary notwith-

standing, a child, until he has reached that measure of experience and understanding of life which shall make his opinions valuable, should be subject to the loving but nevertheless strict authority of his elders—an authority which is conceived in justice and motivated by affection, and which leaves large liberty for the child to work out his ideas in free self-expression, without violating the rights and privileges of others. Habits of obedience or disobedience formed in infant years colour the entire life and involve relations not only to home but to school and state. Multitudes of criminals are in that condition because they were either indulged in unruly behaviour or provoked to disobedience. Parents must discipline themselves not to yield, no matter how much they are tempted to "baby" their infants. Firm, beneficent, and loving discipline, coupled with full explanation to develop understanding and coöperation,

produces a considerate and thoughtful personality. Across the pediment of the courthouse at Worcester, Massachusetts, are carved these words, "Obedience to law is liberty." No true freedom can come to either child or citizen which denies this paradox. No child is free to express his best self through indulgence, but rather is forming habits which will shackle him in the years to come. Freedom can only come through obedience; liberty is attained through law. Luther asserted, "The Christian man is freest of all, yet bondservant of all." Yielding to the disobedience of the child can do him no good. It is a revelation of either weakness in parents, which prevents them from being firm in demanding adherence to reasonable behaviour, or a lack of insight into a problem which involves a child's whole outlook toward home and society. Neither mother nor father alone should be made the disciplinarian or the final judge in

all matters. Authority in the home, tempered always by a loving and sympathetic spirit, is the task of both parents.

The old phrase, "mother knows best," has behind it very often a good deal of unconscious dogmatism which may be based upon an omniscience that the parent does not possess. Parental infallibility is an idea which sooner or later is shattered. A wiser course is for parents also to possess humility and honestly admit it when they have made a mistake.

Too little consideration is often given to the father's place in the life of his children. Children are more sinned against by a lack of balanced companionship with the father and mother than in almost any other way. The modern business man who gets up early and goes to work and arrives at home after the children have had their late feeding can see very little of his children. Even when a man is driven by work until it is

impossible for him to play with his children and instruct them as he might if he were at home for all three meals, each day he should manage somehow to have at least twenty minutes or half an hour with them, even if he is forced to take it early in the morning before breakfast.

There are some tested practices in the father's relationship with children that are so beneficial that they can be accepted by any school of thought. A father should very early begin to give his child attention, accustom it to his face, his voice, his form, his arms, his presence, and he can do this best when alone with the child, without the distraction of either mother, nurse, or other children. Later, when the child is more capable of reasoning and can accompany parents upon trips, true comradeship means long talks together. Self-revelation of a father's efforts will often cause son or daughter to reveal the struggles from which

he or she is learning those lessons which will guide life. Nothing so develops reasonableness as participation in important discussions and decisions. If possible, camping trips with one child afford an unparalleled opportunity. Fellowship with a child demands even more attention than conversation with an adult, for little children are sensitive to any preoccupation. No amount of gifts or nurses or even a mother's care can substitute for the masculine companionship of a father. In religious matters, children are apt to receive instruction from mother, but to take their direction from father. If he is indifferent, they very likely will be uninterested in religion. If he is genuinely concerned, the child will probably be interested also. A father who takes seriously his responsibility in the spiritual life of his children is a reënforcement of inestimable value to the mother who is constantly in attendance upon her little flock.

Method of Instruction in the Home

An important principle in the method of religious instruction in the home is that religion must never be used as a club to scare a child and give him a distorted view of God. If God is explained in terms of benignity, kindness, forgiveness, courage, and love, children will come to love Him naturally. The parent who uses the authority which attaches to God to frighten a child for his small infractions, is paving the way for a loss of faith in future years.

From a practical point of view, religion for most believers focusses in the person of God and the person of Jesus Christ. Most men and women pray to both, regard both as equal in spiritual authority, wisdom, and power. Jesus, for most believers, is "very God of very God." He was, in every high spiritual sense, the Word made flesh. God dramatized in one radiant life the fulness of His beauty, His love, and His compassion.

Jesus represented in perfection God's forgiveness and affection. Children as well as adults who do not so easily find God in the radiant pageant of nature, the courage and kindness of men, the mysterious, watchful care which older people call Providence, can quite easily believe in Jesus and find in Him those qualities and capacities necessary for an ample and adequate faith. His charm as an infant with Mary and Joseph at Bethlehem against the rude background of stable, ox, and ass, His courage and vigour in hard days of travel and healing, His compassion by the roadside, His attitude toward children, His sacrificial heroism in the last tragic journey to Jerusalem, make an irresistible appeal to the sensitive hearts of little boys and girls. Children quickly come to know and love Jesus. When their thoughts turn toward God, it is easy to explain that God is like Jesus. Just as Jesus was thoughtful, kind, and loving, so God is

thoughtful, kind, and loving. The religion of children generally centres around Jesus and properly so.

Religion as a duty appeals to few children. It is when they, as well as adults, find adequate reasons for love, for trust and forgiveness, that they have faith. In beautiful coloured prints and in Bible stories they quickly become acquainted with the charm and beauty of Jesus' personality and easily find in Him a Friend. They come to know and value Him for themselves. Adults are inclined to impose religion by authority, but authority will not keep religion in a child's life unless the child is increasingly aware of its value and resourcefulness. The appreciation of value is a key conception in the development of spiritual life in any age. Religion should be presented in terms of freedom, generosity, compassion, privilege, and beauty as well as in its aspect of stern duty. A well-instructed child, as he grows

older, will eagerly assume the duties of a religious man or woman.

Sound religious and moral instruction in the home or elsewhere can only be inculcated by those who themselves believe in what they teach. Expectation and example are two prime words in this field of effort, an effort which, to accomplish its highest results, must become a fine art. Religion, like appreciation for beauty and adherence to ideals of any kind, is caught by contagion as well as by precept. Religious training in the home must embrace not only the high expectation of the parent, but also a life which affords a noble example. If parents pray, the child will pray; if parents have an ordered and harmonious life, conditions are favourable that he, too, will have self-discipline and peace of mind. Teaching without example convinces few children, but teaching by life as well as by word is the most powerful of all arguments.

CHAPTER IV

MATERIALS FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AVAILABLE FOR ANY HOME

ADEQUATE materials for religious instruction are available in almost every home and only await their utilization. Music, Bible stories, fairy stories and fables, art, simple children's prayers, poetry, the dramatization of Old Testament or New Testament incidents, and the use of work as a medium for teaching religious values are ready at hand.

Music is unsurpassed as a means of developing not only the æsthetic life of children, but also in eliciting that sense of wonder and adoration which is the beginning of trust and faith. Music more than almost any other means of religious instruction, save prayer, allows full expression of a child's mystical nature and helps him not only to receive training through the words, but to express through the melody that for

which neither he nor his parents have adequate vocabulary. All art is man's attempt to express that which evades him in the speech of common day, and if grown men and women employ music as a means of communion and thanksgiving for which they have no words, much more do little children need beautiful music as a medium through which to express their love and trust.

Children should hear from their parents many of the great hymns, such as, "Away in a Manger," "Holy Night," "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear," "Now the Day is Over," "Fairest Lord Jesus," "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Me," "Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild," "Jesus, Tender Shepherd, Hear Me," "Once in Royal David's City," and others, bringing as they do not only religious instruction, but a spirit of reverence and worship. Any number of timeless folk songs express religious aspiration of the

highest order, not only in their words but in their tunes.

Any form of worship, be it the simplest family service at morning or evening or a cathedral high mass with full choir, should be a celebration of the qualities and person of God, His goodness, His patience, His compassion, and His loving-kindness. As a celebration, it should be objective in its mood, praising and exalting Him, as companion, guide, and friend. Scripture, hymns, and prayer are most helpful when cast in an objective mood, and make more easy those spontaneous petitions, thanksgivings, confessions, and intercessions which are the very life of great and genuine prayer.

The following hymns are dear to the hearts of many younger children:

1

Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me;
Bless Thy little lamb to-night;
Through the darkness be Thou near me;
Keep me safe till morning light.

Through this day Thy hand has led me
And I thank Thee for Thy care.
Thou hast warmed me, clothed, and fed me;
Listen to my evening prayer.

II

Now the day is over,
Night is drawing nigh,
Shadows of the evening
Steal across the sky.

Now the darkness gathers,
Stars begin to peep.
Birds and beasts and flowers
Soon will be asleep.

Jesus, give the weary
Calm and sweet repose.
With Thy tenderest blessing
May our eyelids close.

III

Little drops of water,
Little grains of sand,
Make the mighty ocean
And the pleasant land.

So the little moments,
Tiny though they be,
Make the mighty ages
Of eternity.

Little deeds of kindness,
  Little words of love,
Make our earth an Eden
  Like the heaven above.

IV

All things bright and beautiful,
  All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
  The Lord God made them all.

Each little flower that opens,
  Each little bird that sings,
He made their glowing colours,
  He made their tiny wings.

The purple-headed mountain,
  The river running by,
The sunset, and the morning,
  To brighten up the sky.

The cold wind in the winter,
  The pleasant summer sun,
The ripe fruit in the garden,
  He made them every one.

He gave us eyes to see them,
  And lips that we might tell,
How good is God Almighty,
  Who doeth all things well.

Bible stories, graphic in character and full of ethical and spiritual content, are unequalled for children. The best fifty or sixty from the Old Testament and an equal number from the New, furnish a magnificent list of readings. *Æsop's Fables*, the timeless Grecian myths, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, and other old classics help provide that background for judgment which is the necessity of every human being.

Some parents deny their children the rich spiritual lore of the Bible because it contains tales of immorality, and what about Jonah and the whale! Leave out in tender years the stark, unvarnished realism which clothes the stories of the moral lapses of Israel's heroes and there is still a wealth of material that remains. Where can one match the incidents on the way to the Promised Land, the test of Elijah and the priests of Baal, the stories of Saul, Jonathan, and David, of Samson and Gideon, the captivity and

the return, the calling of the Twelve, Jesus' friendships, Paul's shipwreck and other incidents on Paul's missionary journeys, the parables of the Old Testament as well as the parables of the New? The Bible has dozens of the best stories in all literature. A child lives in the age when parable and picture fit into his world of fancy. There is no need to dwell on every ethical point or theological implication of the story. If he fixes the story in his memory, it might mean one true thing to him at eight and many true things to him at twenty-one. For a growing spiritual life there must be an adequate background of historical fact. Understanding the Jesus of history enables the growing child to understand more intelligently the Jesus of experience. The attenuated spiritual life of many adults is a result of too meagre a background of knowledge. One cannot indicate all the implications of a Bible story or of a Greek myth, but if a child

learns it, his experience will enrich the content and it will be a growing possession within him.

By sheer application to memory work, a child may possess himself of dozens or perhaps hundreds of the finest passages from the Bible. Great truths contained in cryptic sentences from Isaiah, the Proverbs, from St. Paul, or from Jesus' utterances have proved a stay and a help to countless multitudes amid life's dangers and hardships, and it is downright unfair to children to deny them the opportunity of having a memory well stored with the best ideas the world has ever known.

The great language and literature of devotion is in the Bible. Hundreds of books draw their power and inspiration from it. A countless multitude of artists, poets, saints, and ordinary believers have found the bread of life within its pages. Most devotional literature is weak and pale com-

pared to the Old and New Testaments, expecially the latter. Parents who read it and are familiar with its teachings, who know where to find a hero or an incident in the sweeping pageant of its characters, are never at a loss for the most significant materials of religious education which can be associated immediately with the life situations in which a child finds himself.

Good books of paraphrases, excerpts or stories from the Bible, are increasing as religious educators are discovering more and more fruitful approaches to the mind and heart of children. Best of all, mothers and fathers can mark passages throughout the entire Bible and have them always at hand for those periods of reading which are the pleasure of the parent and the delight of little children.

A helpful *Course for Beginners in Religious Education* for children five years of age, by Mary Everett Rankin of Teachers College,

Columbia University, has been published by Scribner's. The same house has published *The Children's Bible*, by Henry A. Sherman and Charles Foster Kent. For those who wish suggestions on worship, Scribner's have published the *Manual for Training in Worship* by Hugh Hartshorne. Georgia L. Chamberlin and Mary Root Kern have published, through the University of Chicago Press, two volumes on Child Religion in Song and Story, entitled *The Child and His World* and *Walking with Jesus in His Home Country*. The same press publishes *Stories of Shepherd Life*, by Elizabeth Miller Lobingier, and *Hebrew Home Life*, by the same author; Georgia L. Chamberlin's *An Introduction to the Bible for Teachers and Children* and *The books of the Holy Bible;* and Herbert W. Gates' *The Life of Jesus*. Nora Archibald Smith has published a volume entitled *Old, Old Tales from an Old, Old Book*, through

Doubleday, Doran and Company. The Macmillan Company publish *Bible Stories for Children, Old Testament; Bible Stories for Children, New Testament*—both edited by R. G. Moulton; and *The Little Children's Bible* and *The Older Children's Bible*, both of the latter edited by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and others. Houghton Mifflin Company have brought out *Bible Stories to Read and Tell*, by Frances Jenkins Olcott, illustrated by Willy Pogany; *An Old, Old Story Book*, by Eva M. Tappan, illustrated; *The Christ Story*, by the same author, also illustrated; *The Christ Story for Boys and Girls*, by Abraham M. Rihbany, with coloured illustrations by Gustaf Tenggren; *Old Testament Stories, When the King Came*, by George Hodges, with coloured illustrations by Frank C. Pape; *The Garden of Eden*, by the same author, illustrated; *The Castle of Zion, Mornings of the Christian Year*, by Bishop Charles L. Slattery. The

Century Company have an abridged edition of the King James Bible entitled, *The Bible for Young People*, with illustrations, and *Women of the Bible*, by Annie Russell Marble. The American Book Company has brought out *Old Stories of the East* by James Baldwin, and *John Bunyan's Dream Story*, by the same author. Other books are *Bible Stories in Bible Language*, by L. M. Bryant, Appleton; *Bible Stories for Young People*, by Sarah E. Dawes, Crowell; *Stories from the Life of Christ*, by J. H. Kelman, Dutton; *Bible Stories for Little Folks*, by Edna B. Rowe, Standard Publishing Co.; and *The Beautiful Childhood*, by E. Frances Boulting, published by Harcourt, Brace & Company. Of special value is the King's Highway Series of eight books brought out by Dean Hodges, Professor E. Hershey Sneath, and Professor H. H. Tweedy. This is only a partial list of good books available for parents. The wise parent will use careful

discrimination in fitting the material to the particular child.

Many mothers and fathers seriously question the ethics of telling fairy stories and fables to their children. The problem is not so much one of complete exclusion as discrimination. Fairy stories in which a wolf or bear eats a little girl, or where men steal or are brutal or unkind, can do no good, but stories in which beauty and fancy are mingled with a correct and wholesome association of ideas are not only relished by most children, but are useful for instruction. "Little Red Riding Hood" may be helpfully excluded, but who would not include "The Fox and the Grapes," "The Ugly Duckling," and the race between the "Tortoise and the Hare"?

Too little use has been made of art as a means of spiritual instruction in the home. *Palestine and Transjordania*, by Preiss and Rohrback; *The Gospel in Art*, by John La

Farge; and *The Gospel in Art*, by Bailley, are excellent Macmillan publications which furnish the background for ethical and Biblical instruction from the works of old masters. For instance, a picture such as Le Rolle's "Arrival of the Shepherds" reveals in the demeanour of the herdsmen three attitudes toward Jesus. One shepherd is kneeling in sheer wonder looking upon the Infant as the object of his supreme adoration, a second shepherd is a-tiptoe gazing inquiringly at the Mother and Child, adoring Jesus as One who shall answer life's questions. A third shepherd is raising his hand in allegiance, worshipping Jesus as the One who shall be the leader of all the faithful. Every figure or group of figures in scores of the best religious paintings represents a mood, an attitude, or a condition, and in simple terms these can be understood and appreciated by little children.

The æsthetic and the religious are closely

related, and art offers a rich field for developing the spiritual consciousness through appreciation of the aspiration in the great works of men's hands. Painting, sculpture, and architecture can all be used to deepen and amplify a child's sense of reverence and worship. From the abundance of good coloured prints available through the Medici, the Arundel, and other societies and publishing houses, it is comparatively easy to construct a scrapbook which will be a source of spiritual enhancement to both parents and children, or to frame beautifully coloured prints showing scenes in the life of Christ. Poor prints or poor drawings will do little to train the child except in bad taste.

A serious question with most parents is how to teach children to pray. The best way to teach a child is through example. By kneeling with him and repeating the prayers which are appropriate to his age,

he soon learns the words and can repeat them for himself. The prayer learned "at mother's knee" may have mother for the object of its address. A truer procedure is for both parent and child to kneel and pray together. The mood of worship and the address to the Deity will never seem unreal to little children. In fact, the other world is as real to them as the world they meet with their five senses. Naturalness and reverence and example will lead any normal child in the life of prayer. Children soon learn to repeat and discover the meaning of the simple thanksgivings, petitions, and intercessions which constitute their short but fervent prayers. Alternating prayers, day by day, directs attention to the words and their meaning and keeps prayer from becoming a mere repetition.

Many parents are worried as to what age to begin to pray with children, or to teach them to pray. No age can be set arbitrarily.

Prayer, like so many other activities of the mind, depends upon the child's awareness and powers of observation. It is not too early to begin saying simple children's prayers with the younger members as soon as they are aware of the sequence of words and sentences and begin to repeat them themselves. The meaning will become apparent later. In privacy, in the quiet of a child's room, is the best place to begin prayers. A child sometimes develops disorderly habits at prayers if brought into the family devotions too young, but even then, a quiet, kindly, and dignified demeanour on the part of the older ones, more or less ignoring the undisciplined talk of the children, will soon accustom the child to the mood. Certainly it is unwise to force a child to pray or to attend family prayers. If he sees others enjoy these family meetings together, he will in most cases come himself without compulsion.

Under no circumstances should an audience be brought in to hear the children's simple bedtime outpourings of their spirit. Such a practice makes them self-conscious and shows an entire absence of that respect for the deeply spiritual nature of little children so sensitive to such inappropriate behaviour on the part of their elders. If grace at table comes to mean that the children speak a piece to be applauded or commented upon by members of the family, or by strangers, the quality which distinguishes prayer from ordinary conversation will, in all but the rarest cases, be lost. The following may be suggestive as children's prayers, leaving the child free to add his own hopes and wishes and his own wistful words of thanksgiving as he sees fit.

MORNING PRAYERS

Now I wake and see the light,
O God, who kept me through the night,
To Thee I raise my voice and pray
That Thou wilt keep me safe to-day. Amen.

Be with me, Lord, as here I pray,
And keep me by Thy side to-day.
Please make me gentle, pure, and true
And kind in all I say and do,
Honest in every word and deed,
And quick to help when others need. Amen.

Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child.
I would to Thine arms be brought:
Dearest Lord, forbid it not.
In the Kingdom of Thy grace
Give a little child a place. Amen.

We thank Thee, Lord, whose care has kept
Our homes in safety while we slept.
And pray that through this long, long day,
Thy loving hand will guide our way.
In school, at play, be near us still,
And make us wish to do Thy will. Amen.

EVENING PRAYERS

O God who lovest me,
I give my thanks to Thee
For all things fair.
I thank Thee for the light
And for the restful night
And for Thy care.

Forgive me, as I pray,
For what I've done this day
That has been wrong.
Make me each day more kind.
Give me a truthful mind,
And make me strong.

Help people everywhere
To give Thy children care
As Thou dost me.
And may we, like the Child
Of Bethlehem so mild,
All live with Thee.

God is love,
That love surrounds me,
In that love I safely dwell.
'Tis above, beneath, within me.
God is love and all is well.

Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Thy love go with me through the night
And wake me with the morning light.

Now that the joys of day are done,
I thank Thee, Lord, for all Thy care,
And ask that through this coming night
Thy love will keep me. Hear my prayer.
If any sick or suffering be,
Dear Saviour, draw them close to Thee. Amen.

Lord, keep us safe this night,
At rest from all our fears;
May angels guard us while we sleep,
Till morning light appears. Amen.

Our Father, you have given me
So much of love and joy to-day,
That I am thinking joy and love
To other children far away.
Wherever they lie down to sleep,
Happy and tired with work and play,
Yellow and brown and black and white,
Our Father, bless them all to-night. Amen.

GRACE BEFORE MEALS

Be present at our table, Lord:
Be here and everywhere adored.
Bless these Thy gifts and grant that we
With others share what comes from Thee. Amen.

(*To be Sung*)

God is great and God is good,
And we thank Him for our food:
By His hand we all are fed,
Give us, Lord, our daily bread. Amen.

We thank Thee, Lord, for this our food,
For life and health and every good.
Make us remember others' need,
And so, through us, the hungry feed. Amen.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Be you to others kind and true,
As you'd have others be to you;
And never do nor say to men
Whate'er you would not take again.

A book of prayers in verse, many of rare beauty, prepared by Mary Dixon Thayer for Catholic children and published by the Macmillan Company, is very suggestive.

There are few practices more beneficial from a spiritual standpoint than simple and reverent grace at meals and some form of family worship. Good manuals, daily study books with Scripture, comment and prayers, can be purchased from any good book store. *The Meaning of Prayer*, *The Meaning of Faith*, and *The Meaning of Service*, by Fosdick; *The Marks of a World Christian*, by Fleming; *The Christian Basis for World Democracy*, by Latourette, and many other excellent books for daily personal or family Bible study are available,

containing Scripture passages in an orderly sequence, a meditation, and a prayer. If very young children become restive during family worship, conceived in adult ideas and language, worship should be so simplified that they too can participate in the simple but fundamental ideas employed.

Prayer is central in any religious life, be it the awakening spiritual consciousness of a child or the mature and considered faith of men and women of wide experience. Prayer is not only petition but also adoration, thanksgiving, intercession, communion, and praise. A deep and abundant life of prayer means that all of these elements are raising one's mind and heart toward God.

Poetry, as well as music and art, is an available resource in religious instruction. Beginning with Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verse* and John Farrar's *Songs for Parents*, one can easily lead up to the *Idylls of the King* and a large range of verse

genuinely relished by growing children. One of the best collections of poetry for children is *A Child's Thought of God*, compiled by Thomas Curtis Clark and Esther A. Gillespie. Imaginative reading enhances spiritual insight, so persuasive and winsome an element of the parables and teachings of Jesus. There are many elements in religion difficult to describe in the sober garb of prose. Poetry, like music and drama, helps to express aspiration and appreciation of the joy and the communion and the sense of trust for which no ordinary description will suffice. Children grow to love the Psalms for the rhythm and repetition of ideas as well as the splendour of their language and conception.

A rational number of projects can quite easily be carried on at home which have a definite value spiritually. The project method, overdone, can easily deteriorate into a diffuseness which focusses nowhere,

but rightly conceived it aids the child to learn by doing. The building of Palestinian landscapes, the sandbox and pasteboard gradually evolving into dramatizing scenes from the Bible, are all valuable in the imaginative years of childhood.

Simple dramatic representations of Bible scenes as well as more ambitious pageants and tableaux appeal to children, fixing the sequence of Biblical events in their memory as well as conveying spiritual teaching. Quite remarkable productions can be staged by little children with a few bright-coloured curtains and shawls for flowing robes and a vivid Bible incident upon which to let their imagination play. The new emphasis upon dramatic presentations in Church School work is an evidence of its practicability as a means of religious instruction. Such performances are far more valuable than recitations of honey-sweet poems far removed from actual life situations.

A certain number of chores can be done by children even in metropolitan centres, which form excellent material for religious instruction. As children grow older the work element in life will increase and allow the best possible medium for the inculcation of the principles of honesty, thoroughness, and integrity. A schoolmaster was asked, "Where is your time-table; do you teach religion?" "We teach it all day long," he replied. "We teach it in arithmetic by accuracy; we teach it in language by learning to say what we mean, 'yea, yea and nay, nay.' We teach it in history by humanity. We teach it in geography by breadth of mind; we teach it in handicraft by thoroughness. We teach it in the playground by fair play. We teach it by kindness to animals, by courtesy to servants, by good manners to one another, and by truthfulness in all things. We teach it by showing the children that we, their elders, are their friends and

not their enemies." Any thoughtful parent can use chores, and such work as children can do, as materials of religious instruction. Religious instruction is far greater in its extent than Bible reading and prayer alone, important as they are. It involves a child's whole outlook upon life and his attitude toward it, always with reference to his supreme allegiance to God. Unless a child learns that religion sometimes means scrubbing and scouring and cleaning up messy situations, he has failed to perceive one of its most significant aspects.

For well-rounded spiritual instruction, parents will find great help in following, at least for its main events, the calendar of the Christian year, thus giving the children sound information about the life of Jesus from Bethlehem to Golgotha.

Christmas, the most beautiful of all religious festivals, in its present-day practices of excessive present giving and receiv-

ing, causes many grave questions to conscientious parents. Christmas is the celebration of the Incarnation, but modern merchandising skill is turning it for thousands into a secular day of feasting and display. Moderation in gifts and feasting and emphasis upon carols, joyous services, and family worship in celebration of the birth of Jesus, is coming as a corrective to present-day customs in many thoughtful homes. In all cases it is far better to train children to give than to receive, for even the most angelic children quickly become greedy and acquisitive unless trained in generosity and altruism, not only by precept but by example.

The problem of Santa Claus arises sooner or later with every child. Deceit will never do anything but harm. Many little children can be taken into the joyous secret and never experience a shock of disillusionment, but for others of a sensitive nature, the dis-

covery that they have been deceived causes them to doubt the whole Christmas story so closely woven with the Santa Claus idea. In cities where so many organizations have men and woman dressed as Santa Claus on the streets, the illusion cannot be long maintained, and it is better to inform children at the very start as to this time-honoured custom. The figure of Santa Claus is a survival of an old Dutch custom, honouring St. Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, about 300 A. D., the special friend of little children. The Dutch were wont to pay honour to the memory of St. Nicholas by making gifts on December 6th, the anniversary of his death. Later, this gift-making festival was combined with the celebration of Christmas on December 25th, and, like so many similar combinations, it has divided attention between gifts and the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The infancy of Jesus is so attractive and winsome to little children that it

is unjust to allow the more social side of Christmas, so apt to create acquisitiveness, to dominate.

There is no harm in Santa Claus if there is no deceit connected with him and if he is kept in his place. He must not monopolize the Christmas celebration or be its object. Packing stockings for one another and the sheer tingling joy of early Christmas morn need have nothing else save the captivating love of Him whose day is celebrated. If Santa Claus obscures the celebration of the One born in the stable of Bethlehem, he should be forgotten.

Easter presents another problem, when Easter bunnies, cards, and other highly commercialized devices tend to minimize the profound spiritual significance of the festival. Many little children think of Easter as "Bunny Day" due to the constant impact of commercial enterprise upon even their young experience. The outward and

visible celebration so often tends to hide from children the inward and spiritual experience in the life of Jesus and in the life of His followers, which is the occasion of the festival.

Every child should have the advantage of attending Sunday School. There is a social element in religion which is missed if a child receives all his religious instruction in the home alone. In the give and take of discussion a child's ideas are enriched and expanded. But if some complain that the local Sunday Schools are inefficient and teachers inadequately prepared, it is nevertheless true that coöperation with pastors and priests can generally secure adequately prepared teachers, even if it is necessary to pay them, which will meet the demands of eager and discriminating parents. A child who receives his spiritual instruction solely in the home is apt to become opinionated and overcritical of religious ideas without

his own circle. He can easily become too individualistic in that which, in the nature of the case, is social as well as personal and vitally affects the life of all his associates. Intelligent planning with the church can avoid eccentricities and nonsocial tendencies and ideas, and bring an immense resource to the aid of parents. Secular teaching regarding religion is not enough for adequate spiritual development. A child not only needs information, but also inspiration and consecration, mediated through his associates in the class and through the personality of an intelligent and devoted teacher.

The whole scheme of religious education in the home, as well as in the school, should be linked up with the church as an institution if the parent, after sober thought, feels that the church is that continuing body which is the major instrument in society for the creation and conservation of spiritual values.

It is well to have an ideal of health and beauty for children, but parents must choose whether or not they desire a well-rounded pagan, a polished humanist, or a Christian man or woman, whose life is crowned by intelligent altruism and whose personality is warmed and enriched by the life of Him who said, "He who would be first among you must be servant of all." If home and school training is only sharpening the tools of life without reference to the timeless values of religion,—purity, honesty, unselfishness, and love—it is only a partial education. "A sound mind in a sound body" is not enough for a Christian family; rather, the ideal should be "a sound mind, a sound body, and a dedicated spirit." Our generation has heard too much of leadership, a mistake we are apt to pass on to our children. We need again the emphasis upon a free but a humble heart, upon whole-souled but willing dedication.

But some will say, "I have a child which is different; he or she is not like the other children in the family or the neighbourhood." Of course, every child is different from every other child. There are as many varieties of religious experience as there are human beings. Generally speaking, however, children as adults approach religion in one of three ways. Some are primarily intellectual, desiring information, reasons, and logical statements; others make the ethical approach, finding their religious life and longings best satisfied by doing their duty, living up to the rules, playing the game, while a third broad group make the æsthetic approach and find God and spiritual values through appreciation of beauty in music, colour, nature, and in the love and trust of those about them. No one person falls exclusively in any one of these categories, and everyone has something of each in his nature, nevertheless almost everyone

has some dominant temperamental quality which makes him more sensitive to the intellectual, the ethical or the æsthetic approach. Some children are sanguine and practical; some are visionary and mystical. The gracious fact about religion, the spirit that was in Jesus, is that there are special interests for every type of mind and thought. The stolid child will find hard, practical work to do, and the visionary will find room for creative appreciation. No two children are alike, but there are resources and materials for all.

Many mothers ask: "Reducing the whole programme of religious education to its essentials, what *should* I teach my child?" Certainly this above all else, the life of Jesus, the circumstances of His birth (omitting, of course, any discussion about the immaculate conception, or the virgin birth, for little tots), the story of the flight into Egypt, the teaching in the temple, His

temptation and baptism, the story of all His friendships—with Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Zacchæus, Peter, with the Twelve—the story of the triumphal entry, His great parables, discourses, and compassionate acts, a brief but clear account of the crucifixion, the story of the resurrection, and the great stories of the Book of Acts, the beginnings of the early church. This is the outline which later can be amplified by profounder instruction about Jesus' teaching, but first the children will remember best the simple factual story. After this is understood, it is well to give them the main graphic stories of the Old Testament in chronological sequence, so that the child may have, first in barest outline, and then with ampler and enriched content, the history of the people of Israel from whom Christ sprang. His life and the experience of His people form the background from which our faith has come. There need be nothing obscurantist, no

allegorical or strained interpretations, but the vivid living story, alive with men and women and children, laden with spiritual fire and ethical content. A child will remember the story and later make the spiritual application to his own problems.

No human being is completely adequate for life alone, no matter how robust or intelligent or self-reliant. When Henley cried out:

> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced or cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody but unbowed.
>
> It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll;
> I am the master of my fate,
> I am the captain of my soul,

he was deceiving himself. Barrie, commenting upon these lines, remarked: "A fine mouthful, but it would be better to say my head is bloody and bowed." Sooner or later

every human being comes to an hour of temptation or sorrow or unaccustomed strain for which there is no human resource; then it is that the child or man or woman reaches out for resources known only unto faith. An early habit of communion with God, a childhood custom of dependence upon Him who is the source of strength and beauty and goodness, a consciousness of partnership with Him who also struggles to achieve perfection in an incomplete world, the knowledge that all our Lilliputian efforts to achieve honesty and purity and love are linked with His titanic efforts, all our small acts and decisions cast against the cosmic background of His ongoing purposes, will stabilize and give peace and victory to a girl or boy, to a man or woman, who else would have gone down in discouragement and confusion. Alone we are not enough.

If truthfulness, a clean heart, gentleness, altruism, compassion, and generosity are of

value, they must be cultivated. Education alone and a good home alone are not sufficient. Education may only make a brilliant selfish egotist or even a criminal. There are disciplines and commitments in the spiritual realm indispensable for the creation of that form of character which is after the manner of Christ. Such character seldom occurs spontaneously or automatically or accidentally; it is generally the result of patient loving care through the years of childhood.

There has been much in these pages not ordinarily considered as having religious significance, but either all of life must be spiritualized and made sacramental or religion will be relegated into a place by itself and separate from life in some remote corner of the mind. Religion has no narrow content; it is our means of fulfilling and completing life. For its creation and its growth no contributing or inhibiting factor is too small to receive attention. No parent can af-

ford to forget that first impressions are most important, that in the early months and years a child's character and disposition are largely conditioned, even though in later life he may by heroic efforts change them. No labour shall pass in vain which helps to create that atmosphere of peace and trust and love in which boys and girls give their allegiance to Him whose nature is love and whose service is perfect freedom.

THE END

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